United Nations A/ES-10/710–S/2016/65

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
25 January 2016

Original: English

General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-first year

Identical letters dated 22 January 2016 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

Israel, the occupying Power, continues its pursuit of illegal and provocative policies in the Occupied State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, to the grave detriment of the Palestinian people suffering the oppression of its illegal occupation and the prospects for a peaceful and just solution. Ongoing illegal Israeli policies and measures in the recent period are further exacerbating the volatile situation on the ground and heightening tensions between the two sides.

Once again, the international community is witnessing the obsession by Israel, the occupying Power, with its illegal settlement policy, including the destruction, theft and confiscation of Palestinian lands and properties, constituting clear violations of international humanitarian law and war crimes under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. This week, on 20 January 2016, the occupying Power authorized the declaration of 370 acres in the Occupied West Bank, south of Jericho, as so-called "state land". This, to be more exact, is occupied Palestinian land illegally confiscated and, coincidentally, adjacent to the illegal Israeli settlement of "Almog", in which Israeli settlers have been illegally present for the past 20 years.

If implemented, this plan would be the largest land expropriation by the occupying Power in the Occupied West Bank since August 2014, when, it should be recalled, Israel confiscated 4,000 dunums (988 acres) of land near the settlement of "Gush Etzion". In this regard, we take note of your recent press statement on this latest provocative declaration, in which it was reiterated that "settlement activities are a violation of international law and run counter to the public pronouncements of the Government of Israel supporting a two-State solution to the conflict".

In addition to such illegal measures, yesterday, the occupying Power, using armed bulldozers, demolished three housing structures belonging to Palestinian Bedouins in the Jabal Al-Baba neighbourhood of Al-Eizariya in the Occupied East

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Jerusalem area, displacing 17 Palestinians, half of them children. Israeli occupying forces and bulldozers raided and surrounded the Jabal Al-Baba neighbourhood and forcibly evacuated residents, many of whom were held at gunpoint while they demolished the houses. Besides the feelings of anger, extreme grief and resentment felt among the Palestinian population there, the demolitions caused fear and panic to spread among the children who were bearing witness to Israel's brute force and violence. The families whose homes were demolished were not even able to retrieve their personal possessions and thus lost everything when their homes were destroyed. Here, it is relevant to note that the homes demolished were mobile homes donated by the European Union. Moreover, the Jabal Al-Baba area, which has a population of 300 civilians, is under threat of more demolition plans as the occupying Power is proceeding with plans to build thousands of settlement units to further expand the so-called "E1" area.

We have repeatedly cautioned that Israel's illegal settlement campaign is undermining and fragmenting the contiguity and territorial integrity of the State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, and physically threatens the viability and prospects for the physical realization of the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders. This is being carried out in flagrant and grave breach of international humanitarian law and complete defiance of the international community's condemnations and demands for a halt to all such provocative and illegal schemes.

The Palestinian leadership reiterates its demands that Israel, the occupying Power, rescind these latest decisions and cease immediately and completely all of its settlement activities in the Occupied State of Palestine, including in and around East Jerusalem, and abide by its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention. This is critical for salvaging the two-State solution and restoring any credibility whatsoever to Israel's alleged commitment to it.

In addition to illegal settlement activities and the destruction of property, the occupying Power continues to commit grave violations against the Palestinian people, violating nearly every human right, including the right to life. Palestinian civilians, including children, continue to be killed or seriously injured as the Israeli occupying forces and settler militias continue to use excessive, indiscriminate force against our defenceless, occupied people, with complete and utter impunity. It is clear that, without protection for the Palestinian people, as called for by the Palestinian leadership, more and more Palestinians will be killed while seeking freedom and the realization of their human rights. And what is clearer is that, without determined international action, Israel will continue to act above the law without fear of punishment or consequences.

It has been documented that, since the current period of unrest began on 1 October 2015, 162 Palestinians, among them 29 children and 7 women, have been killed by the Israeli occupying forces and terrorist settlers. Thousands more have been injured as occupying forces continue to use excessive and indiscriminate force against the Palestinian civilians, and hundreds of others have been assaulted by Israeli soldiers and settlers.

Below are just some of the crimes perpetrated by the occupying Power in the recent period:

15 January 2016:

- Israeli occupying forces shot and killed Mohammed Majdi Qita (age 26) east of the Al-Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip
- Occupying forces fired live and rubber-coated bullets and tear gas canisters at Palestinians peacefully demonstrating near the entrance of the Al-Jalzoun refugee camp north of Ramallah, injuring three children

16 January 2016:

- Wissam Qasarwah (age 21) was killed by occupying forces near the Huwwara checkpoint, near Nablus
- Israeli gunboats fired at Palestinian fishing boats off the Khan Younis shore in southern Gaza

17 January 2016:

- Israeli settlers wrote racist and inciting slogans in Hebrew on the gates of the Dormition Abbey Church in the Old City of Occupied East Jerusalem that provocatively read, among other things, "Kill the Christians, the enemy of Israel"
- Israeli occupying forces raided the Palestinian National Theatre in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, north of the Old City of Jerusalem, and banned it from holding a cultural event

18 January 2016:

- Occupying forces raided the village of Silwad, north-east of Ramallah, and arrested 14 civilians, taking them to an unknown destination
- An extremist settler from the illegal settlement "Ariel" ran over two young brothers, one of them a child, killing Khalil Mousa Amer (age 19) and injuring Odai Mousa Amer (age 17), west of Salfit in the northern West Bank

20 January 2016:

- Israeli occupying forces accompanied by bulldozers demolished a house belonging to Heba Abu Asab in the Beit Hanina neighbourhood, north of Occupied East Jerusalem
- Two tents used as shelters by Palestinian families living in the village of Susiya, east of Yatta, to the south of Al-Khalil, were torn down by occupying forces
- Extremist Israeli settlers attacked a number of Palestinian homes in the centre of Al-Khalil

21 January 2016:

- Occupying forces razed Palestinian-owned land located on the outskirts of the villages of Kafr Al-Labad and Shoufa, to the east of Tulkarem in the West Bank, to expand a nearby illegal settlement

- Occupying forces razed agricultural lands (15 dunums) belonging to the Al-Okl family west of the town of Beit Ola, north-west of Al-Khalil
- 19 Palestinians were detained by occupying forces in overnight raids across the West Bank
- Israeli occupying forces detained three children from the town of Yatta, south of Al-Khalil, while the children were grazing their sheep on the village's land. Hassan Ihmdat (age 12) and brothers Mithqal and Alaa Ihmedat (ages 12 and 13, respectively) were taken to an unknown destination.

The Palestinian leadership condemns all of Israel's illegal, destructive actions and calls on the international community, including the Security Council, to demand an end to all of Israel's illegal policies and practices in the Occupied State of Palestine, including all settlement activities and other violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. Should Israel continue to ignore the calls and the will of the international community, we call for the immediate consideration of measures to compel Israel's compliance with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions to be taken by the Security Council, which is charged with "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security". The international community can no longer only condemn or be appalled by Israel's illegal actions; it must take real action to bring an end to its illegal policies and practices, including its illegal, destructive colonization of occupied Palestinian land.

This letter is in follow-up to our 572 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 15 January 2016 (A/ES-10/709-S/2016/42), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations